

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electrical unit comprising:
a wireless communications port;
control circuitry coupled to the port, the control circuitry having, at least, an inactive mode interrupted by a periodic limited duration active mode, including circuitry to monitor the port for receipt of an expected synchronizing wireless signal, during the active mode, and, responsive thereto to determine if a received signal is an expected signal.
2. A unit as in claim 1 which includes at least a radio frequency receiver coupled between the port and the control circuitry.
3. A unit as in claim 2 which includes additional circuits to evaluate the received synchronizing signal for the presence of a signal expected indicium, and, responsive thereto, to determine if an additional message is expected.
4. A unit as in claim 3 which includes further circuitry to extend the active mode and to acquire and respond to any expected additional message.
5. A unit as in claim 3 where the control circuitry comprises, at least in part, a processor and executable instructions.
6. A unit as in claim 5 which includes timer circuitry, coupled to the processor, for initiating the periodic, limited duration active mode.
7. A unit as in claim 5 which includes executable instructions for at least receiving data using a different protocol than exhibited by the synchronizing signal.
8. A unit as in claim 5 which includes executable instructions for transmitting data with a different protocol than the received synchronizing signal.

9. A unit as in claim 7 which includes executable instructions that sense and decode multiple data signals received from multiple sources substantially simultaneously.
10. A unit as in claim 9 where the sense and decode process comprises bit arbitration:
11. A method comprising:
transmitting a wireless synchronizing signal on a periodic basis;
entering an active mode to receive and evaluate the synchronizing signal, and responsive thereto, entering one of a data receiving or a data transmitting mode with the data having a different protocol than the synchronizing signal.
12. A method as in claim 11 which includes evaluating multiple simultaneously received data signals and discerning one from another.
13. A method as in claim 12 which includes minimizing energy requirements at a plurality of synchronizing signal receiving locations between such signals.
14. A method as in claim 11 which includes transmitting data signals at different offsets relative to the synchronizing signal in response to at least one of, a substantially random number, or, a unique device identifier.
15. A communication system comprising at least two devices that can wirelessly transmit and receive signals;
a first device wirelessly transmitting a synchronization signal;
at least a second device receiving the wireless synchronization signal, the second device synchronizes functions to the synchronization signal such that the energy consumption of the second device is reduced for a period of time between synchronization signals.
16. A system as in claim 15 where at least the second device includes a battery.

17. A system as in claim 15 where the synchronization signal is transmitted periodically with a predetermined timing.
18. A system as in claim 15 where the synchronization signal includes at least one of RF frequencies, optical frequencies or sonic frequencies.
19. A system as in claim 15 where the synchronizing function includes transmitting a signal representative of a detector state.
20. A system as in claim 18 where a detector state comprises at least one of an alarm, trouble, voltage, input, or sensor condition.
21. A system as in claim 18 where the first device receives the transmitted signal.
22. A system as in claim 18 wherein the said transmitting of a signal includes at least in part a frequency that is the same as the synchronization signal frequency.
23. A system as in claim 15 where the synchronization signal includes variable frequencies.
24. A system as in claim 15 which includes a plurality of devices receiving the wireless synchronization signal.
25. A system as in claim 24 where members of the plurality each include circuitry to transmit data signals at different offsets from the synchronizing signal in response to at least one of, a substantially random number, or, a unique device identifier.